PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION – BASIC MODULES FOR TEACHER TRAINING – TRAIN

Qualification Concept for Literacy Practitioners
Handbook

Introduction

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Introduction

The EU GRUNDTVIG project "TRAIN – Professionalization of Literacy and Basic Education – Basic Modules for Teacher Training" began in October 2006. The project has a term of two years and involves partners from Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, France, Cyprus and Switzerland.

In Europe the development of literacy and basic education is very different – and this applies to the professional development of trainers as well. Professionalism within literacy and basic skills is a difficult subject because teachers and trainers have to deal with adults who are marginalised or disadvantaged. In addition to their reading and writing difficulties the students do have learning problems. Therefore teachers and trainers have to improve their knowledge of psychological and social aspects. It is necessary to develop innovative methods of teaching and learning, including interactive technologies. Even if the importance of training literacy and basic education practitioners and professionals is not disputed there are enormous differences in how to deal with it. In some countries you can find job descriptions for the staff, and universities provide training sessions with final examinations and certificates; in Great Britain core curricula and standards have been developed for students and efforts are made by the government to improve teacher training in the field of literacy and basic education. However, in most European countries – as in most of the participating countries - there is a lack of teacher training qualifications.

Within the framework of the TRAIN project; strategies, concepts and examples of good practice are now to be triaged, analysed and disseminated in the partner countries as well as in additional European countries which already have more experience in this field.

The TRAIN partnership developed a compendium with country reports providing state of the art of professional development in thirteen different European countries. Even if there are a lot of differences it is possible to identify the following trends:

- We see an increase in efforts towards professionalization in all countries we have looked at.
- Professionalization is seen as a key towards the improvement and future assurance of quality in the literacy field.

- Professionalization is rarely initiated or required by policy, but by the literacy community itself.
- Literacy teacher's courses vary substantially concerning goals, duration, qualification levels, standards, and accreditation.
- There are rarely any full time permanent positions for literacy teachers across Europe and there are still a lot of volunteers working in the field. Unstable working conditions for practitioners is a prevailing problem as long as there is no sustainable funding to support the high level of demand for literacy courses.

As there is a lack of agreed competence profiles at the European and at the national levels as well (see Lattke 2008, p. 160f[1]) we have developed a questionnaire "Profile of competencies in the field of literacy and basic education" in order to get more information about actual skills and competence needs of those working in the field in the participating countries.

The explorative research we did carry out – the state of the art reports and the questionnaire - helped prepare an important project objective: strategies for five continuing basic education modules for teachers are to be developed and carried out in the area of literacy and basic education. These are to be looked upon as models linking up various examples of good practice throughout Europe:

Module 1: Social marketing communications
Inadequate or absent information of when, where and how a leaner can access tuition might build barriers to participate. The aim of this module is to enable the practitioners to develop a social marketing communication strategy.

Module 2: Principles of adult learning in the field of literacy and basic education – An introduction
Teaching adults with low basic skills requires broad and specific know-how and competences. Due to this fact, the general aim of this module is to give teachers and tutors all necessary information, practices, skills, competences and attitudes to work effectively with adults.

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[1] Lattke, Susanne (2008): Challenges and Options for Further Action. In: Nuissl, E./Lattke, S. (eds.) Qualifying adult learning professionals in Europe. Bielefeld

Module 3: Project work in literacy and basic education

Learning shall create opportunities, which enables students to promote their knowledge and competence for different purposes in every day life. The main purpose of the module is to stimulate and enable teachers in searching new ways and creativity in their work with literacy students.

Module 4: Individual learning and ICT skills in literacy and basic education

Nowadays the use of a PC and the internet are elements of daily life and therefore also elements in literacy and basic education. This module should enable teachers to discover and/or increase the contributions made by systems based on ICT and Individual Learning.

Module 5: Learning counselling in literacy and basic education

The way pedagogues see themselves and the way they regard their tasks changes: they become counsellors, moderators and facilitators. The aim of the module "learning counselling" is to enable tutors to support and accompany their participant's learning processes.

Structure and construction of the modules

At first, the modules are briefly described. Dealt with here will be, "Description of the target group, aims and objectives, rationale, description of content, methodological and didactical aspects, key learning points and recommendations, results and references". A "timed agenda" gives a short overview of the several days' seminar. The "detailed work plan" is a grid in which detailed statements regarding "Time, learning outcomes, methodologies and evaluation" will be made. Furthermore there are work sheets, exercises and PowerPoint presentations with the relevant information and case studies for the exploration and/or clarification of selected aspects.

The modules have been carried out and tested and there are reflections regarding further implementation in the partner countries. With the qualification concept we could hopefully make a contribution to the professionalization in the field of literacy and basic education.

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On behalf of the TRAIN Project Team